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THE ORIGIN OF THE PENTATEUCH.

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THE purpose of this paper is to present in the briefest and simplest manner a suggestion as to the origin and original form of the Pentateuch. So far as the writer knows, none of the biblical critics by profession have ever advanced it, even tentatively; yet to a student of the most ancient religions and religious literatures hardly an idea could be more obvious. To secure the utmost directness along with brevity in the presentation, the form of question and answer will be followed.

1. If Moses wrote anything, for what purpose is it probable that he wrote it?

Answer: To serve as a lectionary, that is, as a series of compositions to be read aloud from time to time in the presence of the people in connection with divine service.¹

2. What must almost inevitably have suggested this to his mind?

Answer: The fact that in Egypt in his day and many centuries before his day such readings or recitings formed a prominent part of public worship, and that thus from childhood to manhood he had habitually listened to them in the temples as intoned by the so-called "priest reciters."²

3. If Moses aimed to write, not a code of laws as such, nor a historical treatise as such, but simply and solely a lectionary for use in public worship, what would it be reasonable to expect to find in it?

Answer: First and foremost a miscellany.

4. If, as we know, the Egyptians had elaborate hymns to the

¹ See articles "Haphtarah," "Parashioth," and "Lectionarium" in MCCLINTOCK AND STRONG'S *Cyclopædia*. These references are in no wise intended as *proof*, but only for suggestive information.

² See ERMAN, *Life in Ancient Egypt*, pp. 90, 289 ff.

gods, which were intoned or sung in their temples, and Moses was familiar with such, what might we expect to find in a lectionary prepared by him for the use of his own people?

Answer: Just such hymns as that recorded in Exodus, chap. 15, or that in Deuteronomy, chap. 32, or such a psalm as the ninetieth in the Hebrew psalter. The fact that the Hebrew language had names of prehistoric origin for such a great variety of musical instruments, only one or two of which seem to have been loan-words from a foreign tongue, goes to show both the antiquity and the high development of sacred music among this people in the earliest times.³

5. What might we further expect?

Answer: We might further expect to find numerous repetitions—one and the same divine command, or promise, or intervention, or covenant, deliberately presented in different forms of composition, here more and there less fully, just as Stanley in newspaper and book and lecture and private epistle narrated over and over particular incidents connected with his experience in central Africa. We might also expect to find pre-Mosaic writings editorially presented with his own, provided they contained facts or sentiments which it seemed important to preserve from oblivion, or which seemed adapted by public use to promote the knowledge and worship of Yahweh.

6. If the Israelites at the time when Joshua superseded Moses had any literature, what did it most probably resemble?

Answer: A collection of reading lessons for public use prepared for the direct purpose of preserving, and of increasing, the piety and the patriotism of both priest and people. The author or authors of such a collection, if it was directly designed for use as a lectionary, had no inducement to fit each historic or legal or metrical composition to its preceding and following piece, and as to repetitions of important facts or injunctions in different lessons, these would be desired rather than avoided, since they would the more effectually lodge in the memory of the hearers the reiterated fact or doctrine.

³ See article "Music" in the Bible dictionaries.

7. In this view, what parts of the Pentateuch may very possibly have been of pre-Mosaic authorship?

Answer: Such narratives as the original of the story of Eden or of the flood. Also the earliest genealogies. Even the first chapter of Genesis, called by some the "Psalm of Creation," may not impossibly have been written before the days of Moses and by him been given a more strictly monotheistic form.⁴ Even Professor Gunkel, of Berlin, has just emphasized the fact that the idea of a *creation* of the world by one divine power was current among the east Semites and Egyptians centuries before the time of Moses.

8. Why is attention called to this aspect of the pentateuchal question?

Answer: Because it is intrinsically important, and because the professional biblical critics have failed to test it. It is possible that not a few of their difficulties may be analogous to those which a few thousand years hence a general literary critic would find in attempting to interpret the historical selections in an ordinary American school reader as an attempted history of the United States. A truly critical mind should surely guard itself against a misconception so obvious.

It may be added that a study of the texts employed in the Babylonian temple worship would be little, if any, less suggestive in this connection than is the study of the Egyptian. There was in fact a "book of the law of Ea" uncounted generations before we find the Hebrew writers referring to the "book of the law of Yahweh." Even in India priestly readers or reciters, as distinguished from professional rhapsodists and story-tellers, have existed from immemorial times. See the just published work of E. W. Hopkins, *The Great Epic of India*, pp. 363 ff., where priestly readings or recitations systematically arranged to cover the four months of the rainy season are mentioned, and where light is thrown on the manner in which the genealogies of the patriarchal world of the Semite may have been preserved from oblivion.

⁴ See MOFFAT, *Comparative History of Religions*, Vol. I, pp. 93 ff.